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RESTORING DIPLOMATIC READINESS

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, in the coming weeks, the Committee on the Budget will begin consideration of the concurrent budget resolution for Fiscal Year 1999. I would like to take a few minutes today to discuss the continuing need for our government to provide sufficient resources for international affairs. Since becoming the ranking Democrat on the Committee on Foreign Relations, I have focused special attention on this question, because I believe that adequate funding for these programs is essential to our national interest.

With the collapse of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet empire, the United States has emerged as the world's sole remaining superpower. With that position comes a responsibility to take a leading role in international affairs. Around the globe, American leadership is essential to preserving stability and security, and advancing prosperity and economic opportunity.

The United States cannot remain an effective world leader without devoting sufficient resources to diplomatic readiness. Just as we need to maintain and train robust military forces in order to protect our security, we need a well-trained and well-equipped diplomatic corps to advance our nation's numerous international interests. Indeed, with the reductions in our military presence overseas in the last decade, it is all the more important that we maintain a robust diplomatic presence around the globe, and that our diplomats, who work on the front line of our national defense, have the resources necessary to do their jobs.

It is sometimes said that, in the modern information age, embassies and the diplomats who staff them are no longer relevant. The assertion is, in my view, absurd. While modern technology has eased communications and travel across the miles, there is no substitute for being physically present in a foreign country. No one can fully comprehend all the intricacies of a nation's politics and government without living in that country. Equally important, diplomacy is about building trust; trust between governments cannot be secured over the phone and fax, but comes, ultimately, from personal relationships that are built over a period of time. In short, the telephone and the facsimile machine cannot replace the on-site presence of well-trained diplomats.

Unfortunately, in recent years we have short-changed our diplomats, and ultimately our nation's interests, by reducing funding for international affairs. Indeed, by almost every measure, the budget for international affairs has declined precipitously over the past decade. Importantly, Congress is waking up to this problem. In Fiscal 1998, Congress increased funding for the Function 150 account--which encompasses foreign affairs funding--for the first time in eight years. But measured against historical averages, funding for international affairs remains low.

According to a recent study by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) prepared at my request, the discretionary budget authority for Function 150 in Fiscal 1998--\$19.05 billion in Fiscal 1998 dollars--is 22.9 percent below the average of the past two decades (\$24.69 billion). Using constant FY 1998

dollars, in only two years in the last two decades (Fiscal Years 1996 and 1997) was foreign affairs funding at lower levels than the current fiscal year. Similarly, as a percentage of total budget authority, Function 150 funding in FY 1998 is 1.129 percent, nearly one-third below the annual average (1.653 percent) for the past two decades.

An examination of the subfunctions of the foreign affairs budget tells a similar story. Funding for international development activities is 14.7 percent below the average of the last twenty years. Security assistance in Fiscal 1998 is 46.4 percent less, in real terms, than the average of the past two decades. Foreign information and exchanges--this is, the broadcasting, public diplomacy and exchange programs carried out by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and the U.S. Information Agency--are at a level 13.3 percent below the average of the period covered by the CRS study.

Only the 'Conduct of Foreign Affairs' subfunction, which includes State Department operational costs, as well as contributions to international organizations and peacekeeping, is above the twenty-year average. But it should be emphasized that the budget for this category in Fiscal 1998 is the smallest, in real terms, since Fiscal 1990. Moreover, the relative size of this category, as compared to the 1970s and 1980s, can be explained by significant increases in the international peacekeeping account, an account which was small during the Cold War, but has increased substantially since the late-1980s.

Ethnic conflicts and regional rivalries--long submerged during the Cold War--have led to the creation of more U.N. peacekeeping missions in the last decade than there were in the previous three decades of the United Nations. In Fiscal 1990, for example, U.S. contributions to peacekeeping was \$81 million. By Fiscal 1994, largely because of the U.N. operations in Bosnia and Somalia, this account totaled \$1.07 billion. The United States bears 25 percent of the cost of these missions, and paid 31 percent prior to 1994.

I am pleased that the President has recognized the

importance of assuring enhanced funding for foreign affairs by requesting \$20.15 billion in Fiscal 1999, roughly one billion dollars over Fiscal 1998. I would like to briefly discuss the highlights of this request, and the notable increases within it.

First, the budget for State Department operations contains two important initiatives. First, the Department seeks authority to construct a new embassy in Beijing, China, and to begin construction on a new embassy in Berlin, Germany. Both projects are essential. Our embassy in Beijing is in deplorable condition, and is barely sufficient given our important interests there. The decision of the German government to move its capital from Bonn to Berlin necessitates the construction of the new embassy there. Several years ago, Congress urged the State Department to fund capital projects of this sort from proceeds derived from sales of existing assets. Because of uncertainties in several foreign real estate markets, however, several anticipated sales have not been realized, thus requiring the Department to seek funding for these construction projects, which I support.

Second, the State Department seeks an increase in its Capital Investment Fund, which provides resources for modernizing its aging information technology infrastructure. The Department is significantly behind the times technologically. In many important posts and offices, it remains reliant on obsolete and obsolescent computer and telecommunications technology. To give just one example, the Department still has an ample supply of Wang computers; several generations of computer technology have emerged since the Wangs were installed, and it is long past time for the Department to replace these antiquated systems. Information is central to the task of diplomacy; modernizing these systems is essential to enable our diplomats to perform their jobs.

The foreign assistance budget contains three increases which are critical to American interests. First, the Administration seeks an increase in the assistance for the Newly Independent States (NIS) of the Former Soviet Union, from \$770 million to \$925 million. These programs are designed to assist the

nations of the region, including Russia, to make the transition from communism

to democratic capitalism. A similar U.S. effort in Eastern Europe has already resulted in the 'graduation' of several nations from U.S. aid programs, demonstrating that American assistance to this region need not be permanent.

Second, the Administration requests \$216 million for the Non-Proliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs account, an increase over the \$133 million appropriated in Fiscal 1998. This funds a number of key programs, including the effort to keep former Soviet scientists employed on useful projects--a program designed to prevent them from selling their knowledge and skills to rogue regimes. Like the Nunn-Lugar program, which is funded in the 050 account, the Science Center program is a critical element in a strategy of containment--a strategy directed not at a nation or ideology, but at controlling the threat posed by the proliferation of dangerous technologies.

Third, the Administration seeks a significant increase in the budget for international narcotics and law enforcement at the State Department. Specifically, it requested \$275 million, a \$44 million increase. These resources are required to continue the ongoing struggle against the narcotics cartels in this hemisphere and elsewhere.

I commend the President for seeking a 20 percent increase in the budget for the Peace Corps, an increase

designed to put the Corps on a path to 10,000 volunteers by the year 2000, well above the current number of 6,500 volunteers. The Peace Corps represents the best of American values and ideals, and advances American interests overseas immeasurably.

Finally, the Administration has requested a supplemental appropriations legislation for Fiscal 1998 for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and urge passage of legislation to pay off our arrears to the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations. Last year's budget agreement allows for an adjustment in the discretionary spending caps for these important priorities. I hope we will act on this legislation soon--and without linking it to unrelated issues.

Mr. President, in closing, let me emphasize this: funding for foreign affairs is but one percent of the total federal budget. But as is reflected in the daily headlines and our own priorities here in the Senate, foreign policy comprises far more than one percent of our nation's interests. As our Secretary of State likes to say, it may account for fifty percent of the history that is written about our era.

This is not to suggest that the foreign policy budget should constitute half of our federal budget; it is to remind us, however, that any reduction in that budget would be symbolic in its effect on the federal fisc, but would be significant in its effect on our national interests. I hope my colleagues will bear that in mind as we begin debate on the budget for the coming fiscal year.